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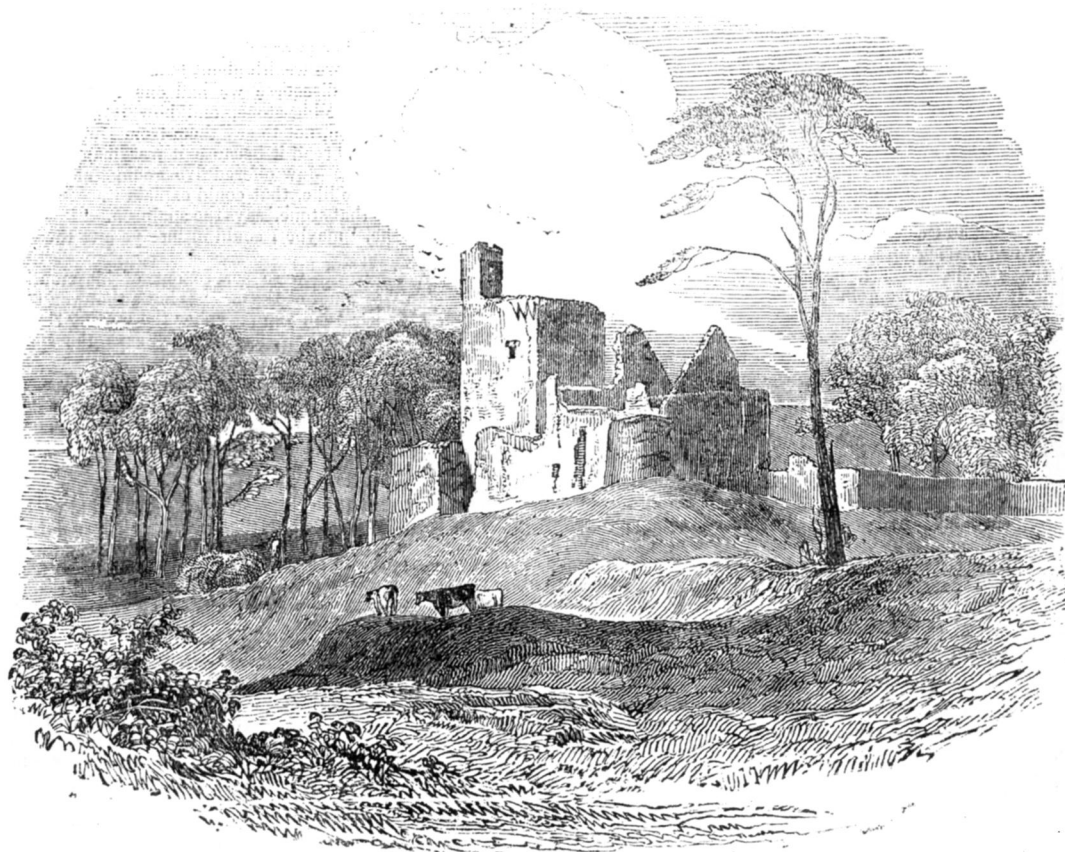
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# THE IRISH PENNY JOURNAL.

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GARRY CASTLE, KING'S COUNTY.

AMONG the many singular characters who figured in Ireland during the last century, by no means the least remarkable was Thomas Coghlan, or Mac Coghlan, the last descendant of a long and ancient family, the ruins of whose fortalice are the subject of the sketch at the head of this article, at least as they appeared some five or six years ago. This extraordinary personage may justly be regarded as the last of the Irish tanistry, as well from his pertinacious adherence to the habits and maxims of that defunct institution, as from his being until his death possessed of the princely domains of his race, almost unimpaired by the many confiscations and revolutions which have swept away so many proud names from the records of Ireland, thus uniting in himself the influence of traditional rank, of such magical weight here, with the influence of territorial possessions, of such magical weight every where. Although for many years a member of the Irish Parliament, as representative for the King's County, the laws which he assisted in making were not at all the laws which he administered. At home every thing was on the patriarchal system,

in all respects conformable to the laws and regulations of the Brehons—himself the grand centre of all authority, his will the fountain of all justice, and his own hand in most cases the administrator of his judgments. Such being the Mac Coghlan, or “the Maw,” as he was more generally and rather whimsically designated, it is little wonder that he should live in the fondest remembrance of a people so deeply attached to old names and old ways as the Irish all over the King's County generally, but particularly in that district of it anciently known as the Mac Coghlan's country, now the barony of Garry Castle, so called from the castle before alluded to, the ruins of which stand beside the road leading from Birr to Banagher, and about half a mile from the latter town.

These interesting remains consist of the tall square keep seen in the accompanying view, and the mouldering walls of some outer buildings, the entire enclosed in a considerable area, with round towers at the corners, and entered by a fortified gateway. They seem to be of some antiquity, this having been the site, at all events, of the house of the Mac Coghlan's

from the earliest periods, until the more peaceful circumstances of the nation permitted them to abandon their narrow and gloomy security for the beautiful residence of Killoolgan, an erection of the seventeenth century, the naked ruins of which now form the chief feature in the landscape to the traveller by the Grand Canal before he reaches Gillen. I am not aware that any records exist to furnish a clue to the history of Garry Castle, nor have I been able to meet any one able to give me any information about it, beyond the usual tirade about Oliver Cromwell, who seems doomed to bear on his back the weight of all the old walls in Ireland. One very old man, who in his youth had been, I believe, a servant of the Maw, was the only person in fact who seemed to know more about it than that it was "an ould castle, an' a great place in the ould times." From him I gathered a good many anecdotes of his former master, of which the following partly bears upon the present subject, and gives rather a good illustration of a class of persons not unfrequently met with, who occasionally support most extraordinary pretensions by methods still more extraordinary, claiming to be proficient in all the forgotten lore of past ages, and even in their rags hinting at powers, the possession of which would be rather enviable. The story is an odd one, but I tell it exactly as I heard it.

"I had business into Banagher one day when I was a gossoon, and just as I came to the hill over Garry Castle, I saw a great crowd moving up the road forrinst me. 'Lord rest the sowl that's gone,' says I, crossin' myself, for by coorse I thought it was a corpse goin' to All Saints' churchyard; but when it came nearer, and I saw the Maw in the front with a whole crowd of gentlemen, some that I knew and more that I didn't, and ne'er a corpse at all with them, I made bould to ax Father Madden what might be the matther.

'Why, my boy,' says he, 'there's some gentlemen come all the ways from Dublin to consther what's written on the big stone over the hall chimley in the ould castle beyant, and the rest of us are going to have the laugh at their ignorance.'

'Deed, your riv'rince,' says I, 'an' it's the fine laugh we'll have in airnest, for sure the smallest gossoon in the country could tell them 'twas written by the Danes long ago, and that it's an enchantment.'

'Hould your tongue,' says he in return; 'whatever it is, I'll be bound it'll puzzle them, for by the book I'm not able to read it myself.'

'Troth, thin,' says I, 'if that be the case, it's little sense the likes of them will make out of it.'

By this time, sir, we got inside the ould gateway, and as the Maw's groom was a cousin of my aunt Peg's, he let me into the hall with the rest of the quality. There was the stone, sure enough; a long narrow stone, all the length of the room, with four lines of writing cut on it, over the chimley. It was in the part of the ould castle that's down now. Well, sir, one ould gentleman—they said he belonged to that college off there in Dublin—takes his spectacles out of his pocket, an' he puts them on his nose, quite grand like, and he looks at the writing. 'It's not English,' says he, 'nor is it French,' says he after a little, 'nor Jarman;' and then he takes another look. 'It's not Latin,' says he, and the rest of the quality shook their heads very wisely; 'it's not Greek,' says he, and they shook their heads again; 'it's not Hebrew,' says he, 'nor Chaldee, nor—pursuin' to me if I know what it is.'

'Baidershin!' says Father Madden quietly: an' with that, sir, you'd think the vault above our heads 'ud split with the roars of laughing. But the great scholar didn't join in it at all, but pulls the spectacles off his nose, and crams them into his pocket, and looking very big at the priest, 'I'm thinking it's Baulderdash, gentlemen,' says he.

Well, sir, one after another they all tried their skill on it, and one after another they all had to acknowledge their ignorance.

'By the powers,' says the priest, 'by yer talk one 'ud think the hiryglyphics themselves were a Readin'-med-aisy to ye, an' here a plain bit of writin' puzzles ye.'

'Maybe, Father Madden,' says the Maw, 'you'd favour us by consthering it yerself.'

'No, sir,' says the priest; 'my vow won't let me read magic; but if you'd wish me to transport the stone anywhere for you, or do any other little miracle that way, I'd be most happy to obleedge you.'

'Oh, no,' says the Maw, 'we'll not put you to that trouble; but perhaps you would come down with us as far as the inn, and have a bit of lunch.'

'With all the pleasure in life, sir,' says the priest, 'the ra-

ther that I'd like to be discorsing these larned gentlemen here;' but indeed the larned gentlemen didn't seem a bit too glad of his company, and small blame to them sure, for may the heavens be his bed, there wasn't a funnier man in the nine counties, or one fonder of followin' up a joke, an' well they knew he wasn't goin' to let them down aisy.

It wasn't long until we were on the road again, makin' for the town; an' as we were goin' along, who did we meet but a spalpeen from the county Galway, that came over as soon as he met us to beg among the quality; an' sure enough he was as poor-lookin' a crathur as ever axed a charity. His legs were bare, and all blue and brackit with could an' hardship, an' the sorra a skreed of dacin' clothin' he had on him but an ould tattered breeches an' a blanket thrown over his shoulders and fastened at the throat with a big skiver; he had a bag on his back, an' a mether in one fist, an' a bootleen in the other; an' if he had any more wealth about him, sure enough it was hid safely. By the discorse we had one with another, he soon larned about the big stone, and how it puzzled all the scholars in the parish, not to say them from Dublin, an' how the priest refused to read it because it was magic; and betther nor all, how the Maw offered five goold guineas to any poor scholar, or the like, that could explain it.

'I'd like to see that stone,' says the spalpeen. 'Poor-lookin' as I am,' says he, 'maybe I could insinse ye into the maining of it.'

Well, sir, the words were scarce out of his mouth when Mac Coghlan was tould of them. 'What's that you say, honest man,' says he; 'can you decypher the writing?'

'I'd like to try anyhow, yer honour,' says the spalpeen, 'worse than fail I can't.'

'Bedad,' says Father Madden, 'it 'ud be a pity not to let you; sure if you say you know nothin' about it, wiser men nor you had to confess that same; an' as for us, why, our time will be as well spent listening to one dunce as to another.'

'Oh, by all manes,' says the Maw, 'we'll go back and hear what he makes of it.' So we all turned back with the spalpeen.

When he came to the stone, it's a different kind of look he gave it entirely from what the quality scholars did; you'd know by the way he fixed his eye on it at the very first, that it was no saycret to him, an' he walked up an' down from one end of the lines to the other, until he had them all read.

'Now, my man,' says the Mac Coghlan, 'if you read it, the reward is yours,' an' he took the five goold guineas out of his purse an' showed them to him.

'I can read it, yer honour,' says the spalpeen; 'but what it says might be displeasin' to some of this company, an' I had betther hould my tongue.'

'By my word,' says Mac Coghlan, 'let who will be offended by it, no part of the blame shall rest on your shoulders, so speak out, an' speak true.'

'Well, yer honour,' says the spalpeen, takin' courage, 'what it says is this, that this castle was built on such a time, an' that it will stand whole an' sound for three hundred years an' no more; an' that it's to be held by eleven Mac Coghlan heirs, and the eleventh will be the last of his race.'

'Bad news for the twelfth,' says Father Madden, 'to have an ould stone barrin' him out of the world that way;' and with that they all laughed, all but the Maw, an' he was as pale as death an' stupid-like, for the three hundred years were just run out, an' he was the eleventh heir; but in a minute or two he recovered himself and joined in the laugh as well as the rest.

'Well, my man,' says he at last, 'you have done what all the learned men in the land couldn't do, an' though the news isn't the pleasantest, you must have your reward. Now listen to me: give up your wandering life and settle here; I'll give you a house an' five acres free of rent for ever: this money will set you up, an' I promise you that you shall never want in my time, short as it is to be. Will you take my offer?'

'Why, thin,' says the spalpeen, 'many thanks by coorse to yer honour for makin' it; but for all the land yer honour has, or one of your name ever had, I wouldn't live other than I do: though I'm here now, 'tis many a mile from where I slept last night, or maybe from where I'll sleep to-night. Goold or silver avails me little, or if they did, maybe I could tell where to find what 'ud buy Galway ten times over.'

'Bedad, honest man,' says Father Madden, 'if you know so much as all that, it 'ud be a great charity entirely for you to stop awhile an' open school here; I'll be bound you'll have a fine lot of scholars, an' I don't say but myself 'ud be among the number.'

'Troth there's many a man 'ud like to have my knowledge, I have no doubt,' says the spalpeen; 'but I'm thinkin' there's few here or elsewhere 'ud like to learn in the school where I got it.'

'Lord save us!' says the priest; 'you didn't sell yourself to the ould boy for it, did you, you nasty brute?'

'I bought it with the past an' not with the future,' says the spalpeen; 'an' what ye saw of it is nothing to what I could show if I had a mind: the blessin' of the poor be with your honour, if it be any use to you, an' it's wishin' I am that I had a luckier story to tell you, and he turned to go away.'

'Well, my good fellow,' says the Maw, 'any how you're not goin' to quit so soon. Neither gentle nor simple passes this road without eating with the Mac Coghlan, an' you must follow the rule as well as another: stay as long as you like, an' go when you like; an' I give you my word you shall have the best of tratemant, an' no one shall bother you with any questions you don't like.'

'Yer honour,' says the spalpeen, 'I'm not a young man, an' yet my head was never this many a night twice on the same pillow, an' you'd be a long day findin' out the spot that in that time I havn't visited.'

'Maybe you're the Wanderin' Jew,' exclaimed Father Madden.

'Jew or Gentile,' says the spalpeen, 'a wanderer I am, an' a wanderer I must be; an' now good bye to ye all, an' God bless ye; and with that away he walked, an' the never a sight of him did any one in Banagher lay his eyes on since. Some said he was this and some said he was that, and more said he was a sperrit; but what do ye think but the great scholars from Dublin, to hide their ignorance, gave out that he was somebody that Father Madden thudored for the purpose to make little of him an' their larnin', and have the laugh against him.'

Next morning when all the country went out of curiosity to see the big stone, they found it torn down an' carried off, for Mac Coghlan got it taken down in the night an' buried somewhere; but, any how, it tould nothin' but the truth, for in a few years after, the castle fell with the frost, an' not long after that Mac Coghlan died; an' sure you know yourself that he was the last of his name." A. M'C.

We should be grateful to any of our correspondents who would favour us with a biographical sketch of the last Mac Coghlan, of whom so many stories are still related by the peasantry of the King's County, and of whom the following sketch is given in Mr Brewer's Beauties of Ireland: it is from the pen of the late Chevalier Colonel de Montmorency. P.

"Thomas Coghlan, Esq.—or, in attention to local phraseology, 'the Maw' [that is, Mac], for he was not known or addressed in his own domain by any other appellation—was a remarkably handsome man; gallant, eccentric; proud, satirical; hospitable in the extreme, and of expensive habits. In disdain of modern times he adhered to the national customs of Ireland, and the modes of living practised by his ancestors. His house was ever open to strangers. His tenants held their lands at will, and paid their rents, according to the ancient fashion, partly in kind, and the remainder in money. 'The Maw' levied the fines of mortmain when a vassal died. He became heir to the defunct farmer; and no law was admissible, or practised, within the precincts of Mac Coghlan's domain, but such as savoured of the Brehon code. It must be observed, however, that, most commonly, 'the Maw's' commands, enforced by the impressive application of his horse-whip, instantly decided a litigated point! From this brief outline it might be supposed that we were talking of Ireland early in the seventeenth century, but Mr Coghlan died not longer back than about the year 1790. With him perished the rude grandeur of his long-drawn line. He died without issue, and destitute of any legitimate male representative to inherit his name, although most of his followers were of the sept of the Coghlan's, none of whom, however, were strictly qualified, or were suffered by 'the Maw,' to use the Mac, or to claim any relationship with himself. His great estate passed at his decease to the son of his sister, the late Right Hon. Denis Bowes Daly, of Daly's-town, county of Galway, who likewise had no children, and who, shortly before his death in 1821, sold the Mac Coghlan estate to divers persons, the chief purchaser being Thomas Bernard, Esq. M. P., in whom the larger proportion of the property is now vested."

## THE ROYAL FAMILY OF STATEN-ISLAND.

It has long been the general belief that the gipsy race, which is found every where else, has never yet penetrated into America; but the opinion is erroneous. There is a family on Staten-Island whose history and habits prove their Zingaro descent, despite the counter evidence of their white skins, patches of which may be seen through the rents of their tatters, like intervals of blue sky in a clouded empyrean.

The patriarch of the horde was in his lifetime reputed an Englishman, although upon this point no intelligence exists in any parish register or book of heraldry—a matter the less to be regretted that his birth is not likely to be disputed by rival nations or cities. All that is certainly known of him is, that he made his appearance on the island about forty years ago, an incarnation of laziness and pauperism, accompanied by a biped of the feminine gender, whom, as God made her, we are content to call a woman: they evinced no desire to hold fellowship with their kind, but immediately plunged into the woods, where they pertinaciously hid whatever talents and merits they possessed. Probably the world used them ill, and like Timon they had left it in disgust. They built themselves a hut of brushwood, and lived, unknowing and unknown, upon the wild products of the soil and the sea-shore, the world forgetting and the world forgot. No one was favoured with any notice of their former history; they wrought not for hire, nor did they seek to render themselves in the slightest degree useful to their fellow-creatures. They were satisfied with a bare, mysterious existence, the objects of wonder and pity; and only proved themselves human by increasing the population of Staten-Land with ten sons and daughters.

In time the he-patriarch died, and his fame died with him; but not till he had so indoctrinated his hopeful family, that they have ever since followed his praiseworthy example. A short time since we paid these Children of the Mist a visit at their residence, profiting by one of a thousand changes of abode which brought them within an easy walk of the Quarantine-Ground. Others may seek objects of interest abroad; we are content with what may be found near home; and in this singular family we found a happy practical illustration of the Golden Age, which poets so much regret, and agrarian politicians so devoutly hope and expect to restore. By the margin of a stagnant swamp, rife with malaria and intermittent fever, embosomed in thick woods, stood a pen of rough boards, obtained heaven knows how, about ten feet square, into which about fifty specimens of animal life, human and canine, were crowded. The den was roofed over, and refused entrance to the sun, but was by no means so inhospitable to the rain. The four winds of heaven sought and found free ingress and egress through the chinks; the floor was not; and altogether we have seen much better appointed pig-styes. We first discovered our proximity to this Temple of the Winds by the greeting of a herd of sorry curs, who made a great noise, but retreated snarling, and with averted tails, at the first exhibition of a stone or a stick, as the dogs of the aborigines are wont to do. A shrill, cracked, but clear voice from within, uplifted in energetic objurgation, stilled the clamour, and we entered upon a scene that beggars and defies description. We had seen poverty before, but had never an adequate conception of its extreme until now.

A bundle of rags, endowed with suspicious and alarming powers of locomotion, advanced to do the honours of the mansion. An unearthly squeak, that would have driven a parrot of any ear distracted, proclaimed that the thing was human; and after close inspection we made out a set of features which we could only have supposed to belong to Calvin Edson or the Witch of Endor. The head surmounted a withered atomy, from which every muscular fibre seemed to have dried away. There was nothing left for Decay to prey upon: a particle more of waste, and the fabric must have evaporated, or been scattered with the first puff, like a pinch of snuff. This was the worthy mother of the brood. Age could not make her head whiter. She must have been more than a century old, and yet hearing, vision, speech, every faculty, was unimpaired, and she was as brisk as any of the horde. According to all appearances, Time had lost all power over her, and she may yet live longer than the everlasting pyramids. Fancy a mummy stalking from its case, and you have some idea of this spectral apparition.

Around the den were arranged without arrangement four rude bedsteads, guiltless then and for ever of beds, or any succedaneum therefor; these being unnecessary and enervat